



Archdiocese of San Antonio
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Feast of the Chair of St. Peter
Archdiocese Pastoral Council
February 22, 2014

The “Chair of Saint Peter” is located inside St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. According to tradition, the chair, enclosed in a bronze casing, was once thought to be used by St. Peter. In fact it more correctly represents the seat of authority and teaching of the Bishop of Rome, the Pope....The Vicar of Christ. The Chair of St. Peter is a larger-than-life, work of art that stands above the tomb that holds the remains of St. Peter, and symbolically captures the moment described in today’s Gospel when Jesus says, “...You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church.”

The awesome permanence that the Chair of Saint Peter represents, seems be the opposite of the sometimes impetuous and imperfect fisherman-disciple, who was reprimanded by Christ when he denied the cross for which our redemption was destined. It was Peter who slept in the Garden of Gethsemane in Jesus greatest time of need. It was Peter who showed his feet of clay when he was shaken and denied Jesus Christ three times as his beloved savior’s human life was slipping away. It was Peter who hid from the cross, leaving John and our Blessed Mother alone in the darkness of Good Friday.

When Jesus asks the question, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter responds, even in his incomplete and imperfect faith, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus praises Peter’s faith, as the source of his encounter with the truth. The future of

the Church hung in the balance as St. Peter allowed his heart to look beyond what his eyes could see. His answer was no less important than Mary's answer to the angel at the Annunciation. Both responses were an expression of a yet unfinished understanding of the reality before them.

Above the Chair of St. Peter is a window that depicts the Holy Spirit pointing to the truth that comes from the Father. Jesus promised the disciples that, "...when He comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth." On Pentecost St. Peter and the disciples felt the power of the Holy Spirit filling them with His gifts and keeping Jesus' pledge. In that moment St. Peter repeated his act of faith with conviction and understanding, saying before the crowds: "God raised this Jesus....he received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father and poured it forth as you see and hear."

Recently, at a gathering of the priests of the archdiocese, I officially declared my intention to consecrate the Archdiocese of San Antonio to the Holy Spirit at the Vigil of Pentecost, June 7th at St. Rose of Lima Church. This will mark the one year anniversary of our commitment to a new Pastoral Vision of the archdiocese, "Encountering Christ, United as Church, Sent by the Spirit."

In his first Pentecost homily, Pope Francis proclaimed: "The Holy Spirit draws us into the mystery of the living God and saves us from the threat of a Church which is...closed in on herself; he impels us to open the doors and go forth to proclaim and bear witness to the good news of the Gospel, to communicate the joy of faith, the encounter with Christ."

Consecration means to set aside for a sacred purpose. I am asking everyone to consecrate themselves to the Holy Spirit so that, like St. Peter, our weaknesses and imperfect faith will be transformed and strengthened. In a prayer of "Consecration to the Holy Spirit" we find these words of surrender, "I ask You for the grace to be faithful to Your inspiration." May we join together as one Church, "Led by the Spirit", allowing our diversity to become a source of the harmony which is at the heart of the priorities and goals of the Mutually Shared Vision.

Nearly three years ago the Holy Father bestowed the Palium on me, the sign of my mission as Shepherd of the Archdiocese of San Antonio. The next day, I was blessed to celebrate Mass at the altar that stands in the shadow of the Chair of St. Peter. It was certainly a moment of God's Grace as I was struck by both the responsibility and blessing that had been laid upon me. I had my Divine calling affirmed that I must be God's instrument, keeping the faith of our people strong and vibrant, helping them to encounter Christ as teacher and shepherd. I could hear the voice of the soon-to-be Saint John Paul II as he prayed for the bishops throughout the world, saying, "I pray that the Holy Spirit may set ablaze the hearts of bishops with His fire, so that we may become teachers of holiness, able to attract the faithful by our example."

May we all share in this vocation that is the foundation of the New Evangelization and together pray, "Ven. Holy Spirit, Ven."